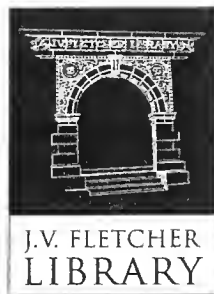


Request for Reconsideration

ELLEN D. RAINVILLE
Director



Widening Westford's World

March 3, 2010

Dear _____

We are in receipt of the "Request for Reconsideration" form which you submitted on February 25, 2010 in reference to the volume The First Annual Grand Prairie Rabbit Festival by Ken Wheaton. Your submittal of this form, and concern about this particular library title, has initiated a process in which the title will be further researched, reviewed, and read by professional staff, and assessed as to its appropriateness for the library collection. We ask your patience as we proceed in this process and can assure you that you will receive further information about this title, its reviews, copies of library policies and updates on the reconsideration process in future correspondence.

We commend you for being a concerned and active reader, and we understand that you potentially anticipated that The First Annual Grand Prairie Rabbit Festival would offer a different reading experience from the one which left you offended. We assure you that we will keep you apprised of our reconsideration process, and in the short term, we would be happy to offer you suggestions of alternative titles better suited to your tastes and interests.

Very Truly Yours,

Ellen D. Rainville

Ellen D. Rainville
Library Director

cc: India Nolen, Assistant Director
Board of Library Trustees

Enclosure
/edr

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REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS

J. V. Fletcher Library

DIRECTOR
ELLEN D. RAINVILLE

[The elected Board of Library Trustees of Westford, Massachusetts has delegated the responsibility for selection and evaluation of library resources to the Director, Asst. Director, Department Heads and their delegates, and has established reconsideration procedures to address concerns about those resources. Completion of this form is the first step in those procedures. If you wish to request reconsideration of library materials or resources, please return the completed form to the *Library Director, J. V. Fletcher Library, 50 Main St. Westford, MA 01886-2599*].

Name [REDACTED] Date 2/25/10
Address [REDACTED]
City Westford State [REDACTED] Zip [REDACTED] Phone [REDACTED]
Do you represent: Self ☒ Organization [REDACTED]

1. Resource on which you are commenting:

☒ Book ☐ Textbook ☐ Video ☐ Display
☐ Magazine ☐ Program ☐ Audio Recording
☐ Newspaper ☐ Electronic information/network
☐ Other [REDACTED]

Title The First Annual Grand Prairie Rabbit Festival
Author/Producer Ken Wheaton

2. What brought this resource to your attention?

3. Have you examined the entire resource?

4. What concerns you about this resource? (Use other side and/or additional pages if necessary)

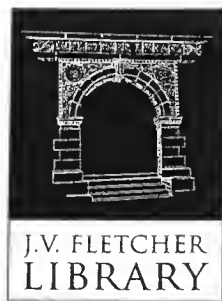
*offended. I read pages 1-13, and as a Catholic I was
It was disrespectful to the priesthood and very disrespectful
to the heart of Catholicism,
the Eucharist.*

5. Are there resource(s) you suggest to provide additional information and/or other viewpoints on this topic?

I do know it is fiction, but I was offended anyway

Revised by the American Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee, June 27, 1995.

Thank you.



ELLEN D. RAINVILLE

Director

Widening Westford's World

May 10, 2010

Dear _____

Subsequent to your submittal of a "Request for Reconsideration" form for the volume The First Annual Grand Prairie Rabbit Festival by Ken Wheaton, J. V. Fletcher Library staff and selectors have read this work, garnered reviews from traditional and web sources, and gleaned the circulation and acquisition statistics for this title in area network libraries.

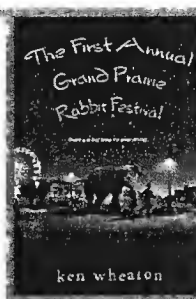
While this first novel is recommended by *Library Journal*, *Booklist*, *Publishers Weekly*, and Bookreporter.com (see attached reveiws) – it is characterized in reviews as "irreverent" and it is peopled by at-times irreverent and flawed characters. While it is certainly clear how both the tone and the characters in this work could give offense, it must be noted -- in defense of the work -- that this title is an equal-opportunity offender. Although Grand Prairie's priest and flock are imperfectly human, the major theme of this work is Father Steve's committed fight to protect and re-energize his parish (which is threatened by the arrival of a Pentecostal evangelist) by throwing the festival referred to in the title. This book stands squarely in the tradition of Southern gothic and regional literature, offering the reader a distinctive local Cajun setting peopled with quirky unusual characters, who possess a unique perspective on virtue. The motif that Father Steve's centenarian black friend "Miss Rita" knows him better than he knows himself is a major chord in this work.

Wheaton's novel additionally falls within the recurring dramatic theme of the "temptation of the pure". This tradition includes classics such as Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter, McCullough's The Thorn Birds, The Nun's Story and the highly popular novels written by Father Andrew Greeley. In these works, the "pure" character may be revealed as hypocritical, viewed as idealized and romanticized, seen agonizing over the life of vows, or portrayed as a good, but imperfect character, as is the case with Father Steve. As one reviewer notes, a major theme of this work is the choice of how to view human vices. This choice falls to both the characters in the book, and to the reader

☆ **The First Annual Grand Prairie Rabbit Festival.**
By Ken Wheaton.

Jan. 2010. 306p. Kensington, paper, \$15 (9780758238528).

Father Steve, a small-town Louisiana priest, has major problems. First, the women. Denise, a self-styled Lolita, is one of his two altar girls. Miss Rita, a centenarian daughter of a slave who helped raised Steve, lives on the booze, pork skins, and other illegal foods he sneaks into the nursing home. Four female congregants have stopped coming to morning mass because he made eye contact during the service. And Vicky, the illegitimate daughter of the previous priest, is becoming much more than a friend. Father Steve's other friend, the charming Father Mark, is leaving the priesthood because of issues with his homosexuality. Yet Father Steve considers the Pentecostals to be the biggest thorn in his side. Their charismatic preacher has set up shop just down the road, and will stop at nothing to build his own flock, including wooing the local Catholics. So Father Steve does the only thing he can to keep his church intact: he organizes the First Annual Grand Prairie Rabbit Festival. Readers need to hold onto their hats because Wheaton's roller-coaster ride of a book has hilarious highs that plunge to soul-baring angst, then zoom back up to the top. —*Shelley Mosley*



his pocket, Aliesha's barber, the handsome Dante, is an enigma to her. For Dante, it's instant attraction the minute Aliesha walks into his shop. But what sort of future can an academic and a barber expect? Besides, there's another major problem: Aliesha, who's moved from Chicago to this southern college town, already has a boyfriend. After she finally spends the night with Dante, he drops off the face of the earth. Through her characters' dialogue, Johnson touches on such tough topics as interracial marriage, tokenism, and racism, creating a thought-provoking look at contemporary African American life. —*Shelley Mosley*

Rainwater.

By Sandra Brown.

Nov. 2010. 256p. Simon & Schuster, \$23.95 (9781439172773).

Brown, a master of contemporary romantic suspense, makes a huge genre leap in her latest novel. Radically switching gears, she sets this gentle tale in Depression-era Texas. The historical setting is not her only departure from her tried-and-true formula; this bittersweet morality play also features a hardworking single mother, an autistic child, and a mysterious boarder with a terminal medical condition. The moment Ella Barron agrees to let a room to David Rainwater, her hardscrabble circumstances are irrevocably altered. As the townspeople, farmers, and ranchers struggle both economically and spiritually, a malevolent evil in the form of a menacing town bully threatens their tenuous hold on survival. Though initially suspicious of Mr. Rainwater, Ella falls passionately in love with a man she knows is doomed. When he makes the ultimate sacrifice to save her misunderstood son, he leaves behind a precious final gift and a lasting legacy of grace and compassion. Though Brown fans may initially balk, many will be irresistibly drawn in by this mesmerizing little fable. —*Margaret Flanagan*

See How Much I Love You.

By Luis Leante. Tr. by Martin Schifano.

Jan. 2010. 256p. Marion Boyars, paper, \$14.95 (9780714531540).

One never forgets one's first love, as Montse, a headstrong teenage girl in the 1970s from a wealthy Spanish family, discovers when she falls in love with the charismatic Santiago, a boy not of her class. Pregnant with his child, Montse abruptly ends the relationship when she discovers him with another girl. Bewildered and defeated by her rejection, Santiago enlists in the foreign legion, where he is deployed to war-torn Western Sahara, a country and people he comes to love and accept as his own. Decades later, as an overworked physician, Montse will discover Santiago's photo among the effects left by a deceased patient, and feel compelled to find her lover again. When her search takes her to the volatile desert region where Santiago was believed to have died, Montse herself is captured by rebels. With vivid imagery of

☆ **A Good Fall.**

By Ha Jin.

Dec. 2009. 256p. Pantheon, \$24.95 (9780307378682).

In *The Bridegroom* (2000), his last collection of short stories, Ha Jin, a National Book Award winner, captures the paradoxes of life under China's Communist regime. In his new stories, sharply etched works remarkable for the contrast between their directness of expression and complexity of feelings, he creates a mirror-image set of tales about a Chinese immigrant community in Flushing, New York. Ha Jin's ear and eye for Chinese American life are acute, as is his sense of how one life can encompass a full spectrum of irony, desperation, and magic. The advent of e-mail enables a sister in China to blackmail her sister in America. A struggling composer develops a remarkable rapport with his absent lover's parakeet. Marriages come under duress, one due to the almost surreal insensitivity of a visiting mother, the other to the husband's suspicions about his wife and the strange truth they reveal. A classic story about grandparents from the old country appalled by their Americanized grandchildren is balanced by the startling title story, in which a young kung fu master and monk achieves an unforeseen form of enlightenment. The quest for freedom yields surprising and resonant complications in Ha Jin's sorrowful, funny, and bittersweet stories. —*Donna Seaman*



desperate village life and keen insight into multicultural influences, Leante's rich, often poetic novel of romance and international politics evokes a sensuous yet savage period in this region's tumultuous history. —*Carol Haggas*

The Suicide Run: Five Tales of the Marine Corps.

By William Styron.

Nov. 2009. 208p. Random, \$24 (9781400068227).

Lest we forget, William Styron (1925–2006) was a major American writer, author of such profound novels as *Lie Down in Darkness* (1951), *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1967), and *Sophie's Choice* (1979). Sadly, he is little read these days. Perhaps this collection of lesser Styron material will stir interest in his earlier works. These five pieces of fiction, referred to as "narrations" (including two previously unpublished), explore Styron's own experiences as a U.S. Marine. The collection, then, is a taste of his talent and one of his major subject-interests. Straddling fiction and memoir, they work out different contexts of the overall theme of the draw of military life, which obviously enticed Styron himself. For larger serious fiction collections. —*Brad Hooper*

Victoire: My Mother's Mother.

By Maryse Condé. Tr. by Richard Philcox.

Jan. 2010. 208p. Atria, paper, \$14 (9781416592761).

Novelist Condé blends research and storytelling in this beautifully written novel that reimagines her mysterious grandmother's life. Victoire was a mixed-race, white-skinned woman growing up in poverty in the French Antilles, a story at odds with the race-conscious Grand Nègre life of Condé's dark-skinned, well-educated parents. As a young woman, abandoned with a baby girl (Condé's mother, Jeanne), Victoire went to work as a cook for the Walbergs, a white Creole family. Victoire saw the Walbergs in their "upstairs-downstairs" house as possible benefactors for her daughter. In Anne-Marie, she found a lifelong friend, and in Boniface, a lifelong lover—relationships

Reviews

Fiction

★ The Brightest Star in the Sky

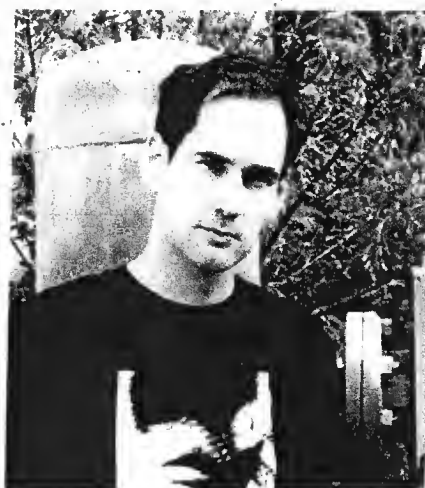
Marian Keyes. Viking. \$25.95 (466p) ISBN 978-0-670-02140-6

Keyes delivers a dizzying vertical view of the mismatched, mixed-up tenants of Dublin's 66 Star Street, friends and lovers who grow up, grow old and give way to their "heart currents" with help from a puckish sprite. This multitiered saga of Dubliners searching for "the brightest star in the sky... the planet of love" straddles slapstick and sophistication in an engaging balancing act both giddy and grand. Here's Katie, publicist, freshly 40, and her workaholic, commitment-phobic fella, Conall; newlyweds Maeve and Matt, who hide a violent and crippling secret that binds them and drives them apart; madcap, sassy Lydia, a taxi driver who juggles worries about her aging mom and an over-the-top passion (mixed with equal parts lust and disdain) for her sexy flatmate; plucked from nowhere hunk Fionn, who hopes to begin a TV career, and his psychic foster mom and her mean-as-a-snake dog who improbably helps bring all the sweet mayhem to a satisfying close. Keyes (*This Charming Man*) is an expert at weaving dark threads into cozy material, and in this ambitious outing, she's in top form. (Jan.)

Best European Fiction 2010

Edited by Aleksandar Hemon. Dalkey Archive. \$15.95 paper (416p) ISBN 978-1-56478-543-5

Hemon (*The Lazarus Project*) edits the inaugural volume of an anthology of European short fiction, and while the maiden outing has many fine moments, there's room for improvement in upcoming years. The mix of authors—35 writers from 30 countries—is excellent and includes better knowns with unknowns, though each piece is allotted an average of 10 pages, leading several of the more promising works to feel truncated. Other pieces (such as Giulio Mozzi's story, originally written as part of an art exhibit)



A mother and the son she gave up for adoption set off on a doomed journey in Derek Nikitas's *The Long Division* (p. 25).

don't seem like the best work to represent an author. Still, there is much excellent work. Christine Montalbetti's surreal and enigmatic "Hotel Komaba Eminence (with Haruki Murakami)" plays on the author's obsession with the Japanese writer. In Igor Stiks's terse but well-managed "At the Sarajevo Market," the discovery of a watch at a Bosnian marketplace triggers a crisis between war-fatigued lovers. Victor Pelevin's acidic satire "Friedmann Space" evolves into a Borgesian tale of Russian scientists sending "lucernauts" past the "Schwarzenegger threshold" to report back on the black hole-like domain of the megarich. This is a good start—one hopes that next year's volume will be a more consistent collection. (Jan.)

The First Annual Grand Prairie Rabbit Festival

Ken Wheaton. Kensington. \$15 paper (320p) ISBN 978-0-7582-3852-8

Authentic Cajun touches (and recipes) spice up Wheaton's delightful debut yarn about faith and the yearnings of the flesh. Fr. Steve Sibille, the reflective protagonist, is re-evaluating his vow of celibacy after being tempted by Vicky Carrier, the sinfully conceived but beloved daughter of St. Peter's church's former padre. Father Steve considers the repeated advice of his family friend Miss Rita, a scene-stealing African-American centenarian who tells Father Steve that what he needs is a woman. Things get stickier for Father Steve when his gay friend, Fr. Mark Johnson, quits the priesthood and the

Rev. Paul Tompkins attempts to woo St. Pete congregants to his Pentecostal church, leading to a big showdown and the festival of the title. Wheaton writes with an infectious energy, and his affection for the characters and culture is authentic without being overhearing or cheesy. Do the *bon temps rouler*? In Wheaton's hands, they sure do. (Jan.)

Wormwood, Nevada

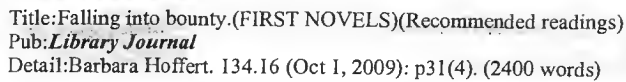
David Oppegaard. St. Martin's. \$24.99 (256p) ISBN 978-0-312-38111-0

A meteorite crashing into the Nevada desert sparks a search for meaning and purpose in Oppegaard's intriguing if flat follow-up to *The Suicide Collector*. Tyler and Anna Mayfield move to Wormwood, Nev., looking to escape the postcollege funk that permeated their lives in Nebraska. When a night out at the local bar is interrupted with a massive explosion nearby, the young couple find themselves in the middle of an already off-kilter town going meteor crazy. Tyler, haunted by the disappearance of his older brother years ago, sees booze, weed and fatigue-induced visions of aliens and becomes involved with a group that believes "visitors" will arrive imminently. Meanwhile, Anna, a former Miss Nebraska, suffers apocalyptic nightmares amid fears that the best years of her life are slipping away. Oppegaard deftly aligns the inner fears and waning hopes of his well-rounded protagonists with the paranormal tremors, but the tension all but dies in the final act as the novel unspools into a disappointingly diffuse anticlimax. (Dec.)

Forever Waiting: Colette's Appeal

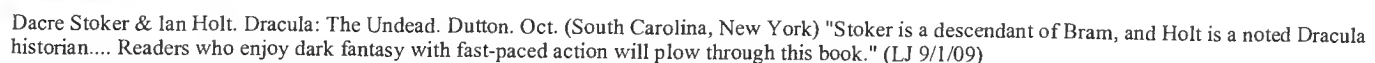
DeVa Gantt. Avon. \$13.99 paper (464p) ISBN 978-0-06-157826-7

Sisters Debra and Valerie Gantt finally complete the Colette trilogy (began 30 years ago) with the story of Charmaine Ryan, governess to the late Colette Duvoisin's girls and heir to Colette's role as soul of the Duvoisins, a family of prosperous 19th-century plantation and mill owners. The novel is heavy with flashbacks and recaps intended to catch readers up with preceding events. It's now 1837, and Colette's widower, Frederic Duvoisin, wishes to make up for past mistakes, but son John remains estranged



Poignant. Imaginative. Passionate. Original. These are some of the words LJ's reviewers used to describe the first novels forthcoming this fall and winter. We haven't been able to review them all yet, but we are providing a listing here, grouped by type, so that librarians can start planning their purchases. Where available, we are quoting from the LJ review and indicating which ones we starred. Enjoy!

Michelle Cameron. *The Fruit of Her Hands: The Story of Shira of Ashkenaz*. Pocket: S. & S. Sept. (New Jersey) "Cameron's famed 13th-century ancestor Meir ben Baruch was the catalyst that set this novel in motion, and the rich details show." (LJ 8/09)





FICTION

January 28, 2010

The First Annual Grand Prairie Rabbit Festival

By KEN WHEATON

Reviewed by Lydia Dishman

Father Steve Sibille may just be a literary descendant of those men and women of the cloth who grapple with the contradictions of faith and feelings (think Greene's "whiskey priest" and McCullough's Father Ralph) across the vaulted arc of a fictional narrative. Like these forbears, Father Steve does not piously squelch his temptations. Instead Ken Wheaton's thoroughly millennial 30-something pastor tosses back copious amounts of alcohol --in addition to the boxed Franzia wine he transforms at mass-- liberally indulges a penchant for swearing, and smokes. A lot. So when pretty young Vicki Carrier appears in the congregation at St. Pete's in backwater Grand Prairie, Louisiana, it feels almost inevitable that Father Steve will add the pleasures of the flesh to his list of his (ahem) indiscretions. But he doesn't.

Not that she isn't thoroughly appealing. Whip-smart and funny, Vicki provides the pragmatic kick in the trousers that Father Steve needs to finesse a scheme -- the festival of the novel's title -- for saving his dwindling group of lackadaisical parishioners from being usurped by the glitzy appeal of the charismatic Pentecostal minister building a new church down the road. Vicki becomes a confidante too, part of a trinity that includes Miss Rita, a brash centenarian and the Sibilles' former housekeeper, and Father Mark Johnson, the gay shepherd of a neighboring flock. Together, they help Steve battle the demons within; and there are plenty, from the metaphysical (Catholic doctrine vs. evangelical fundamentalism) to the commonplace (how to keep from dozing during boring confessions), the surreal (negotiating with the Irish Traveler carny) and the downright funny. The last category includes a revenge scene involving a full coat of red body paint, a marijuana-laced midnight bike-ride to scare the devil (pun intended) out of a cheating girlfriend.

Though chock-a-block with Cajunisms, quirky characters, and divine descriptions of food, Wheaton's work never stumbles into cliché. Instead he delivers an accomplished debut that ends too quickly, and leaves the reader imagining a return to future festivities.

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Review

THE FIRST ANNUAL GRAND PRAIRIE RABBIT FESTIVAL

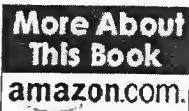
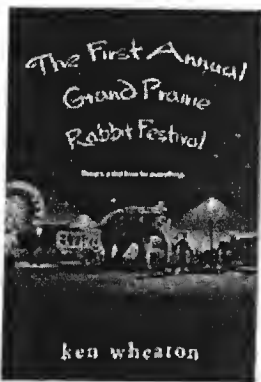
Ken Wheaton
Kensington Publishing
Fiction
ISBN: 9780758238528

- [About the Book](#)
- [Critical Praise](#)
- [Read an Excerpt](#)
- [Author Interview -- January 29, 2010](#)

A campaign to protect his Parish from treacherous Pentecostal invaders prompts Father Steve Sibille to organize the biggest event ever in Opelousas, Louisiana: the First Annual Grand Prairie Rabbit Festival. Obsessing about the Pentecostal Reverend (Brother Paul) merely hardens Father Steve's determination, and the priest uses every weapon in his arsenal, playing to his community's greatest strengths. One of these is accepting the notion (in good faith) that "sinners will be sinners" and that minor vices are actually things people quite enjoy and don't intend to stop doing altogether. These vices, in fact, are often some of the glue that holds St. Pete's Parish together. With the aid of friends Mark Johnson and Vicky Carrier, Father Steve plans an event formidable enough to conquer the opposing forces. In the process, however, Steve becomes closer than he ever intended to Vicky, a long-time friend and volunteer.

From the beginning, Father Steve is a different kind of priest than you might expect: he curses, moans and even has human urges that make him seem a lot like many of the rest of us. His friends are less than pillars of virtue, too, so the three together make quite the trio! Vicky Carrier is a community activist and a long-time volunteer for the Church. She's a delightful young woman who's more than just your average volunteer as she's always hanging out with Father Steve and doesn't treat him with any particular reverence. The fact that Vicky's late father was a priest himself seems to give Vicky a whole different view on the priests' vows. Father Mark Johnson is quite the character as well, a charming guy who befriends Father Steve early on. Mark is himself struggling with the priesthood, having joined probably for the wrong reasons. Mark is gay and can't reconcile his beliefs with the Church's; he struggles a great deal with the constant battle to suppress part of himself and to relinquish his life to the solitude of the priesthood. Father Steve ends up being Mark's best friend through all this, and both Mark and Vicky become the key to making the festival a huge success.

The festival requires a great deal of work and planning, taking many months to put together. But it's sure to be an event like no other, with draws for all kinds of families in the community. They've planned a petting zoo with live rabbits for the kids, a cookout with scrumptious food, exciting carnival rides, and as much alcohol as the community can possibly drink. There will even be a giant elephant available for riding, a fine creature who answers to the name of Gertie. To raise money for the carnival, Father Steve plans other events, including one called "the real monstrosity cookout." All these Parish events are quite enjoyable and funny, and in the



Books by
Ken Wheaton

THE FIRST ANNUAL GRAND
PRAIRIE RABBIT FESTIVAL

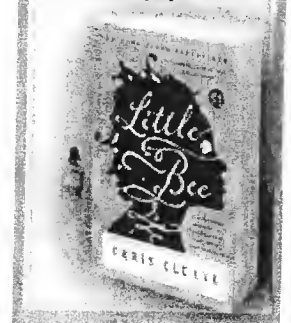


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THE WORD O' WHEATON

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Entries categorized as 'First Annual Grand Prairie Rabbit Festival'

What That Priest Said About My Book

February 17, 2010 · [2 Comments](#)

A while back, I [mentioned](#) that my aunt had called to tell me the real priest in the real St. Pete's in the real Grand Prairie had said some not-so-nice things about [The First Annual Grand Prairie Rabbit Festival](#) during Mass and in the church bulletin. Well, someone was kind enough to send me the words from the bulletin a while back and I figured I'd share.

Saint Peter Roman Catholic Church bulletin:

New Book is "a Lie"

Recently Kensington Fiction published a novel by author Kenneth J. Wheaton, Jr., a native of Opelousas. It is entitled "The First Annual Grand Prairie Rabbit Festival." In his own words, the author offers this note in the book: "[W]hile there is a St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church in a town called Grand Prairie, Louisiana, and, there once was something called a Rabbit Festival, this book in no way reflects reality – or any reasearch – on my part. In other words, the whole thing's a [expletive] lie." Before you consider supporting this author by buying his novel, please know that the contents of this book are highly insulting to the Grand Prairie community and offensive to the Catholic Priesthood in general.

You know, it's his right to be offended. And maybe some priests will find it offensive. But just as he takes issue with the book, I take issue with his claim that it is "highly insulting to the Grand Prairie community." Because that, my friends, is a lie. And I don't base this only on my respect and fondness for Grand Prairie, but also because people who are from Grand Prairie and some who still live there actually like the book.

And the truth is plenty of Catholics around the world and specifically in South Louisiana know stories about priests behaving oddly (and, yes, badly). And that doesn't send them running to other faiths or into the cold, uncaring arms of atheism.

In fact, I found out last week that there was a priest in South Louisiana, one town over from Grand Prairie, with the last name of Sibille (just like my narrator) who left the church to marry a woman. (And thank God I didn't know that while writing the book because who knows what I would have changed ... aside from the name.)

Categories: [First Annual Grand Prairie Rabbit Festival](#)

Stacking Up